Where do we stand six months after Southern California's most recent oil spill

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It's been six months since Huntington Beach, off the Orange County coast, experienced the largest oil spill since 1969, and although time has passed, this disaster event became a lesson to remind coastal communities about the hazards of offshore drilling.

When local Orange County residents first woke up to a strange odor emitting from the ocean Friday morning on Oct. 1, 2021, they weren't fully aware of the situation until authorities notified the public the following day that an oil pipe had ruptured.

At that point, the oil had already begun its deep dive into Huntington Beach waters.

According to the Huntington Beach oil response webpage, an estimated 25,000 gallons of crude spilled into the Orange County coast from the torn pipeline four and a half miles from shore. It was connected to one of the sister offshore oil platforms named "Elly."

What followed the rupture was a series of beach closures, the cancellation of the third Pacific Airshow Date, and a resurgence of questions directed towards offshore drilling.

This past October, a Long Beach press release stated there was no water quality threat in Long Beach, and as "currents continue to pull south from Huntington Beach and not toward Long Beach, beaches and swimming areas will remain open."

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 44 major oil spills have occurred in U.S. waters where over 10,000 barrels (420,000 gallons) of oil were spilled. The largest in California history was the Santa Barbara oil spill that took place in January and February of 1969, spilling over 100,000 gallons of crude.

The detrimental effects of oil spills on wildlife are one of the reasons these disasters call for so much attention. After the Orange County spill, an estimated 28 oiled living birds were collected by the Oiled Wildlife Care Network with another 45 others found dead on arrival.

Oil spills affect wildlife by destroying the water repellency of shorebirds' feathers and the heat insulating ability of fur-covered animals. Without quick action, wildlife affected by crude either drown, suffocate, or freeze to death.

Amplify Energy along with its secondary agencies Beta Operating Company and San Pedro Bay Pipeline Company were charged with negligence in the Orange County oil spill due to their pipeline construction disturbing oceanic wildlife life, according to the Biological Diversity press release.

In addition, this environmental disaster led to the issue of crude finding its way into politics.

"This disaster is exactly why I'm leading the bill in Congress that would end all new offshore drilling along our Southern California coast," said California Representative Mike Levin on Twitter.

According to the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, California is a prime consumer of petroleum products and ranks as one of the top five oil consumers worldwide.

The state produces 45% of the oil it consumes, and 20% is derived from offshore drilling. As per the Bureau of Land Management, California reaps a $1.35 billion economic benefit from oil and gas production on public lands.

Cleanup for the Orange County oil spill reached a conclusion by end of December 2021 as determined by state officials. However, the long-term effects of the oil spill remain to be seen.

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